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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION (IMO): REPORT OF THE
51ST SESSION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE (S/C) ON FIRE PROTECTION (FP),
LONDON, 5-9 FEBRUARY 2006

11. SUMMARY: The 51st session of the IMO FP S/C met at the Royal Horticultural Halls in London 5-9 January 2007, chaired by Mr. Juan Carlos Cubisino (Argentina). The session was attended by delegations from 43 member states, one associate member, one state not a member, one intergovernmental organization, and observers from 14 non-governmental organizations in consultative status. Significant accomplishments were:

1A. Approval, for submission to MSC 83, of amendments to SOLAS regulation II-2/10 to require two separate releasing controls for CO2 fire-extinguishing systems on ships built before 1994, by completion of the first drydocking after 1 July 2009;

1B. Agreement in principle to revisions proposed by the EPA to the toxicity criteria for equivalent fixed gas fire-extinguishing systems, pending final consideration at FP 52;

1C. Completion of guidelines for approval of fixed pressure water-spraying and water-based fire extinguishing systems for passenger cabin balconies;

1D. Completion of a revised recommendation on evacuation analysis for new and existing passenger ships;

1E. Development, after extensive debate, of a justification for a new work program item on "Measures to prevent explosions on oil and chemical tankers carrying low flash-point cargoes", taking into account both benefits and disadvantages of inert gas systems for tankers under 20000 DWT, for submission to MSC 83;

1F. Development, following a US proposal, of a draft unified interpretation on number and arrangement of portable fire extinguishers, for finalization at FP 52; and

1G. Agreement in principle with a US proposal for ship-specific risk assessments as a basis for development of appropriate fire protection measures for external areas on passenger ships, with work to be continued intersessionally by a correspondence group under coordination of Italy. END SUMMARY.

12. Performance testing and approval standards for fire safety systems. Following work at earlier sessions and by an intersessional correspondence group (CG) under coordination of the U.S., a working group (WG) chaired by the U.S. on performance testing and approval standards for fire safety systems completed development, for submission to MSC 83 for approval, of guidelines for approval of cabin balcony sprinkler and fire detection and alarm systems as directed by the Maritime Safety Committee pursuant to the 2006 STAR PRINCESS fire. The S/C agreed that such systems installed prior to 1 July 1998 should be to the satisfaction of the Administration. The WG continued development of test standards for high expansion foam systems using inside air, fixed aerosol extinguishing systems, and fire extinguishing systems for Ro-Ro spaces. Pursuant to development of amendments to SOLAS to require two separate releasing controls for CO2 fire-extinguishing systems on ships built before 1994, the WG developed a justification for submission to MSC 83 for a new work program item to address an extended review of safety matters relating to the installation of total flooding carbon dioxide systems, including system discharge

control arrangements and criteria for lighting and marking of the means of escape from the protected space. The U.S. will coordinate a re-established correspondence group (CG) to continue progress intersessionally in advance of the next meeting.

13. Comprehensive review of the Fire Test Procedures (FTP) Code. A WG on comprehensive review of the FTP Code developed numerous editorial and technical improvements to the Code, taking into account the report of an intersessional correspondence group established at the last session. The group agreed in part with IACS unified interpretation FTP 3, concerning testing of large fire doors; however, it was unable to agree on the provisions concerning approval of doors larger than those tested. The group agreed that related ISO standards should be incorporated by reference into the revised Code to make it more user-friendly. In particular, the revised Code should refer to the relevant ISO standard for specification of a test apparatus and its calibration method, but specifications for test specimens, including conditioning procedures, test procedures, method of analysis/evaluation of test results and performance criteria, should be specified in the revised Code. Finally, the group decided that it was not necessary for mastics and sealants to have low flame spread characteristics provided they are not component parts of "A" or "B" class divisions. Japan will coordinate a re-established CG to continue progress intersessionally in advance of the next session, where the WG anticipated that it would complete its work.

14. Recommendation on evacuation analysis for new and existing passenger ships. A WG on revision of the interim recommendation on evacuation analysis for new and existing passenger ships considered the report of an intersessional CG, and agreed on improvements to existing MSC Circular 1033 for submission to MSC 83 for approval. The new guidance reflects experience gained to date with the methodology, and takes into account the latest technical advances in

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the area, including computer simulation of evacuation times, and revised criteria for passenger awareness times and response time distributions. The S/C did not accept proposals that the guidelines be made mandatory, considering that validation against full-scale tests is needed before any consideration of mandatory application.

15. Measures to prevent fires in engine rooms and cargo pump rooms. On the basis of the work of an intersessional CG, the S/C continued development of a draft MSC Circular to provide guidance on, inter alia, isolating potential oil leakage points from hot surfaces and other potential sources of ignition in machinery spaces. The CG was re-established under coordination of Korea to continue work on the matter intersessionally, and also to consider matters related to fixed hydrocarbon gas detection systems on double hull oil tankers, with a view to completing its work at the next session.

16. Consideration of IACS unified interpretations. The S/C considered ten unified interpretations submitted by IACS, and prepared three draft MSC Circulars containing agreed interpretations of SOLAS Chapter II-2, the IBC Code, and the FSS Code for submission to MSC 83 for approval.

17. Analysis of fire casualty records. The S/C considered proposals that inert gas systems (IGS) be required on tankers of less than 20000 DWT, based on the report to MSC 81 of an Inter-Industry Working Group (IIWG), with a view to providing recommendations to MSC 83. While noting the views of several delegations and observers that IGS would reduce the risk of explosion and should be required, the S/C also noted the value of operational measures, taking into account that the most significant contributory factor to the casualties studied by the IIWG was a failure to follow or understand cargo operation guidelines and procedures. After lengthy discussion, and recognizing the need to consider both benefits and disadvantages of IGS and other measures in depth, the S/C developed a justification for inclusion in the S/C work program of a new item on "Measures to prevent explosions on oil and chemical tankers transporting low-flash point cargoes", for submission to MSC 83.

18. Fire resistance of ventilation ducts. In its discussion of a UK

proposal for strengthening the requirements for ventilation ducts, the S/C considered additional proposals that the scope of the work be expanded to address all ventilation system requirements. The S/C decided that this would require further approval by the MSC, and instead referred the matter to the correspondence group on Comprehensive review of the FTP Code, with a view to further consideration at FP 52.

¶9. Unified interpretation on the number and arrangement of portable extinguishers in accommodation spaces, service spaces, control stations, etc. This new work item was proposed by China at MSC 81 to clarify the number and arrangement of portable fire extinguishers in various shipboard spaces. After consideration of proposals by China and the U.S., and additional information provided by Japan, the S/C prepared a consolidated draft guideline, consistent with the risk-based U.S. proposal, for further consideration and finalization at FP 52.

¶10. Review of the fire safety of external areas on passenger ships. This item stems from a UK proposal at MSC 81, pursuant to the 2006 STAR PRINCESS fire, to address fire safety of external areas other than passenger cabin balconies. There was general support for a risk-based approach as proposed by the U.S., to develop suitable measures based on different categories of external areas and ship-specific risk assessments. The S/C established a CG under coordination of Italy to progress the work intersessionally.

¶11. Election of chairman/date of next meeting. The S/C unanimously elected Mr. J. C. Cubisino as Chairman, and Mr. C. Abbate (Italy) as Vice-Chairman for 2008. The 52nd session of the S/C is tentatively scheduled for 14-18 January 2008 in London.

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